

## COUNTRY DATA: Haiti : Information from the CIA World Factbook

### INTRODUCTION

The native Taino Amerindians - who inhabited the island of Hispaniola when it was discovered by COLUMBUS in 1492 - were virtually annihilated by Spanish settlers within 25 years. In the early 17th century, the French established a presence on Hispaniola. In 1697, Spain ceded to the French the western third of the island, which later became Haiti. The French colony, based on forestry and sugar-related industries, became one of the wealthiest in the Caribbean but only through the heavy importation of African slaves and considerable environmental degradation. In the late 18th century, Haiti's nearly half million slaves revolted under Toussaint L'OUVERTURE. After a prolonged struggle, Haiti became the first black republic to declare independence in 1804. The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti has been plagued by political violence for most of its history. After an armed rebellion led to the forced resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand ARISTIDE in February 2004, an interim government took office to organize new elections under the auspices of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Continued violence and technical delays prompted repeated postponements, but Haiti finally did inaugurate a democratically elected president and parliament in May of 2006. A massive magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010 with an epicenter about 15 km southwest of the capital, Port-au-Prince. An estimated 2 million people live within the zone of heavy to moderate structural damage. The earthquake is assessed as the worst in this region over the last 200 years and massive international assistance will be required to help the country recover.

### GEOGRAPHY

<b>Location</b>	Caribbean, western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the Dominican Republic
<b>Area</b>	total: 27,750 sq km
<b>Climate</b>	tropical; semiarid where mountains in east cut off trade winds
<b>Natural Resources</b>	bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble, hydropower
<b>Total Renewable Water Resources</b>	14 cu km (2000)
<b>Freshwater Withdrawal</b>	total: 0.99 cu km/yr (5%/1%/94%) per capita: 116 cu m/yr (2000)
<b>Natural Hazards</b>	lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and subject to severe storms from June to October; occasional flooding and earthquakes; periodic droughts
<b>Environmental Issues</b>	extensive deforestation (much of the remaining forested land is being cleared for agriculture and used as fuel); soil erosion; inadequate supplies of potable water

PEOPLE	
Population	9,719,932
Ethnic Groups	black 95%, mulatto and white 5%
Religions	Roman Catholic 80%, Protestant 16% (Baptist 10%, Pentecostal 4%, Adventist 1%, other 1%), none 1%, other 3% <i>note: roughly half of the population practices voodoo</i>
Languages	French (official), Creole (official)
Literacy Rate	definition: age 15 and over can read and write total population: 52.9% male: 54.8% female: 51.2% (2003 est.)
Major Infectious Diseases	degree of risk: high food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever vectorborne diseases: dengue fever and malaria water contact disease: leptospirosis (2009)
GOVERNMENT	
Type	republic
Independence	1 January 1804 (from France)
Constitution	approved March 1987
Legal System	based on Roman civil law system; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction
ECONOMY	
Agricultural Products	coffee, mangoes, sugarcane, rice, corn, sorghum; wood
Industries	textiles, sugar refining, flour milling, cement, light assembly based on imported parts
Import commodities	food, manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment, fuels, raw materials
Import Partners	US 33.11%, Dominican Republic 23.53%, Netherlands Antilles 10.75%, China 5.36% (2009)
Export Commodities	apparel, manufactures, oils, cocoa, mangoes, coffee
Export Partners	US 79.76%, Dominican Republic 7.24%, Canada 2.96% (2009)

Per Capita GDP	\$1,200 (2010 est.)
Population below poverty line	80% (2003 est.)

\*CITATIONS: All information included above is extracted from the CIA World Factbook except where noted.